DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 345 237 CS 213 275

AUTHOR Sacco, Margaret T.
TITLE Writing Rationales for Using Young Adult Literature in the Classroom.
PUB DATE 21 Nov 91
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English (81st, Seattle, WA, November 22-27, 1991).
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adolescent Literature; *Censorship; Guidelines; *Reading Material Selection; Secondary Education; Teacher Response
IDENTIFIERS *Controversial Topics; Educational Issues

ABSTRACT

Noting that young adult literature is especially vulnerable to censorship, this guide maintains that every teacher should have a written rationale for every book that is required reading in the classroom. It presents 19 guidelines for writing a theoretical rationale for any book used in the classroom. Twenty references and a list of where to get help if a censorship problem occurs are attached. (SR)

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WRITING RATIONALES FOR USING YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE IN THE CLASSROOM

Paper Presented
to

National Council of Teachers of English
Seattle, Washington
November 21, 1991

Margaret T. Sacco, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Miami University
Oxford, OH

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Restriction of free thought and free speech is the most dangerous of all subversions. It is the one un-American act that can most easily defeat us.

Justice Douglas

WRITING RATIONALES FOR USING YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE IN THE CLASSROOM

By Margaret T. Sacco, Assembly on Literature for Adolescents National Council of Teachers of English Intellectual Freedom Chair, Assistant Professor, Department of Teacher Education, Miami University

The experts agree that every teacher should have a written rationale for every book that is required reading in a classroom. A rationale is defined by Shugert (1979) as simply explanations of professional judgment for teaching and using a book in the classroom. If a teacher can not defend a book, then he/she should not teach a book. Young adult literature is especially vulnerable to censorship. The following guidelines were developed after reading Shugert's and Thompson's (1989) articles on how to write rationales and experience teaching college students in a young adult literature class. A good written rationale should include the following:

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING A THEORETICAL RATIONALE FOR A BOOK USED IN THE CLASSROOM

1. STATE GRADE LEVEL OR AUDIENCE FOR WHICH THE BOOK IS APPROPRIATE. INCLUDE A COMPLETE BIBLIOGRAPHIC CITATION TO A REVIEW.

Campbell (1985, p.46) calls In Country "absorbing and relevant for thoughtful young adults (who are probably at least fifteen).

2. VERY BRIEFLY SUMMARIZE THE BOOK'S PLOT.

3. STATE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES, LITERARY OR PSYCHOLOGICAL OR PEDAGOGICAL OR REDEEMING SOCIAL, SCIENTIFIC, MEDICAL, AND/OR HISTORICAL VALUE THAT APPLY TO THE BOOK (USE HAVIGHURST'S (1953) DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS, KOHLBERG'S (1969) THEORY OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT, PIAGET'S (1962) LEARNING THEORIES, AND ERICKSON'S (1968) IDENTITY CRISIS THEORIES. ROSENBLATT'S (1984) LITERATURE AS EXPLORATION THEORIES, CARLSEN'S (1974) AND EARLY'S (1960) BIRTHDAY CAKE THEORY OF READING DEVELOPMENT, AND VALUES FOR A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY SHOULD ALSO BE USED .

4. DISCUSS LITERARY QUALITIES. USE PETITT'S (1961) DISSERTATION OR REVIEWERS' COMMENTS FOR JUDGING YOUNG ADULT NOVELS.

6. IDENTIFY AND DESCRIBE TEACHING METHODS AND MEASUREMENT INSTRUMENTS THAT WILL BE USED TO DETERMINE WHETHER THE OBJECTIVES WERE MET (AFTER THE BOOK HAS BEEN USED, COLLECT & SAVE ALL DATA SUCH AS STUDENT RESPONSES THAT SUPPORT THE BOOK'S USE). INDEXES TO THE LITERATURE AND CD-ROM DATA BASES SHOULD BE USED IN KING LIBRARY TO LOCATE

BOOKS AND JOURNAL ARTICLES THAT SUGGEST AND EXPLAIN SOUND TEACHING METHODS.

7. DESCRIBE THE OBSERVABLE STUDENT BEHAVIOR CHANGES THAT YOU EXPECT WILL OCCUR AFTER THE BOOK'S USE.

8. IDENTIFY PROBLEMS OF THEME, STYLE, TONE, OR ANYTHING OBJECTIONABLE ABOUT THE BOOK THAT MAY CREATE CENSORSHIP PROBLEMS AND CITE PAGE NUMBERS. CENSORS ARE PREOCCUPIED WITH THE THREE S'S: SWEAR WORDS, SEX, AND SATANISM.
(Try to read the book with Jerry Falwell's perceptions, read Burress' studies, examine Jenkinson's 60 targets of schoolbook protesters in Censorship: Managing the Controversy (National School Board Association, 1989) and all the information possible about why books have been banned.)

9. STATE REASONS WHY YOUR BOOK SHOULD NOT BE BANNED AFTER YOU HAVE READ AT LEAST FIVE ARTICLES ON CENSORSHIP AND NCTE'S THE STUDENT'S RIGHT TO READ STATEMENT (1982.)

10. IDENTIFY OTHER APPROPRIATE BOOKS THAT AN INDIVIDUAL STUDENT MIGHT READ IN PLACE OF THE BOOK YOU ARE DEFENDING. LITERATURE FOR TODAY'S YOUNG ADULTS (DONELSON & NILSEN, 1989), SENIOR PLOTS (GILLESPIE, 1989), AND RECOMMENDED BIBLIOGRAPHIES MAY OFFER SUGGESTIONS.

11. LOCATE AND DISCUSS CRITICAL REVIEWS OF THE BOOK AND CLIP THE RECOMMENDED REVIEWS TO THE BACK OF THE RATIONALE.

USE ERIC CD-ROM DATA BASE, EDUCATION INDEX, CURRENT INDEX TO JOURNALS IN EDUCATION, AND LIBRARY LITERATURE TO LOCATE ARTICLES ABOUT THE NOVEL THAT YOU SELECTED. ADDITIONALLY, IDENTIFY WHICH RECOMMENDED BIBLIOGRAPHIES THAT HAS INCLUDED YOUR BOOK AND/OR WHAT AWARDS THAT YOUR AUTHOR OR BOOK HAS WON.

12. LOCATE BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION AND OTHER SOURCES OF LITERARY CRITICISM. CITE EVERY RECOMMENDED BIBLIOGRAPHY THAT INCLUDES YOUR NOVEL.

13. EXAMINE MODELS OF RATIONALES IN RATIONALES FOR COMMONLY CHALLENGED TAUGHT BOOKS! (SHUGERT, 1988), CELEBRATING CENSORED BOOKS. (KAROLIDES & BURRESS, 1985), AND BEACHAM'S GUIDE TO LITERATURE FOR YOUNG ADULTS (4 VOLS). HIT LIST: FREQUENTLY CHALLENGED YOUNG ADULT TITLES : REFERENCES TO DEFEND THEM (1989) CONTAINS REFERENCES FOR DEFENDING CONTROVERSIAL BOOKS.

14. ASK A GRADUATE STUDENT OR PROFESSIONAL TEACHER TO SERVE AS YOUR MENTOR.

15. WRITE THREE ROUGH DRAFTS OF YOUR PAPER AND MAKE AT LEAST THREE APPOINTMENTS FOR THREE CONFERENCES WITH YOUR INSTRUCTOR OUTSIDE OF CLASS TIME.

16. MAKF ALL NECESSARY CORRECTIONS AND FOLLOW YOUR MENTOR'S AND INSTRUCTOR'S WRITTEN RECOMMENDATIONS. TURN IN ALL THREE ROUGH DRAFTS AS WELL AS REVIEWS WITH YOUR FINAL PAPER.

17. FOLLOW THE PUBLICATION MANUAL OF THE AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION AS YOUR STYLE MANUAL(1983).

18. GRADUATE STUDENTS' RATIONALES SHOULD BE OF SUCH A HIGH QUALITY THAT THEY CAN BE SUBMITTED FOR PUBLICATION.

19. UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' RATIONALES SHOULD BE OF A HIGH ENOUGH QUALITY TO BE INCLUDED IN "**THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH'S DATABASE OF RATIONALES OF YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE**" THAT WILL BE USED BY TEACHERS THAT HAVE CENSORSHIP PROBLEMS.

Additionally, Shugert (1979) suggests that a good book rationale should: be well thought out and thoroughly understood by the teacher who is using the book; cover the steps above; avoid specialized literary or educational technical jargon; be specific; and maintain a tone of respect for its audience.

In conclusion, if you need help defending young adult novels and/or writing rationales, feel free to contact Dr. Margaret T. Sacco, ALAN Intellectual Freedom Chair, Department of Teacher Education, 301 McGuffey Hall, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio 45056 (513-529-6686). NCTE and the American Library Association's Office of Intellectual Freedom have a **National Database of Rationales of Young Adult Literature** written by Ms. Sacco's students.

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WHERE TO GET HELP IF A CENSORSHIP PROBLEM OCCURS

1-800- 545-2433 OFFICE OF INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM, AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION, 50 E. HURON ST., CHICAGO, ILL. 60611

1-800- 389-6283 NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH, MILLIE DAVIS, DIRECTOR OF AFFILIATE AND MEMBER SERVICES

1-513-529-6686 (OFFICE) DR. MARGO SACCO, 301 MCGUFFEY HALL,
1-513-523-3565 (HOME) MIAMI UNIVERSITY, OXFORD, OH 45056

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